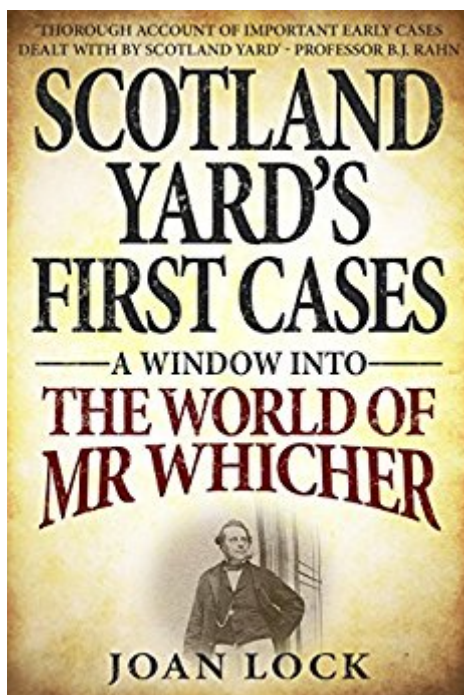


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Scotland Yard's First Cases



Synopsis

When Scotland Yard's first detective branch was set up in 1842 crime was very different from today. The favoured murder weapon was the cut-throat razor; carrying a pocket watch was dangerous; the most significant clue at a murder scene could be the whereabouts of a candlestick or hat; large households (family, servants and lodgers) complicated many a case and servants sometimes murdered their masters. Detectives had few aids and suffered many disadvantages. The bloody handprints found at two early murder scenes were of no help, there being no way of telling whether blood (or hair) was human or animal. Fingerprinting was fifty years away, DNA profiling another hundred and photography was too new to help with identification. The detectives had no transport and were expected to walk the first three miles on any enquiry before catching an omnibus or cab and trying to recoup the fares. All reports had to be handwritten with a dip pen and ink and the only means of keeping contact with colleagues and disseminating information was by post, horseback or foot. In spite of these handicaps and severe press criticism, the detectives achieved some significant successes. Joan Lock includes such classic cases as the First Railway Murder, as well as many fascinating, fresh reports, weaving in new developments like the electric telegraph against a background of authentic Victorian police procedure. Charles Dickens said that Scotland Yard detectives gave the impression of leading lives of strong mental excitement. Readers of this book will understand why. Praise for Joan Lock: 'Thorough account of important early cases dealt with by Scotland Yard.' Professor B. J. Rahn: 'A better picture of the development of the detectives and the CID in the 19th century Metropolitan Police than any other book I have read.' Alan Moss: 'vivid detail'. Historical Novel Society: Joan Lock is an ex-nurse and former policewoman. Joan has also written short stories, radio plays, radio documentaries and eight crime novels. She lives in London.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Scotland Yard is today recognized as one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the world. It was a revelation to see its slow start. There were few men at the time who were capable of creative thinking and reasoning, having never been required to do so. Those who showed an aptitude for discerning clues and following up on them advanced quickly. However, there was no training or education available for new recruits. Even with viable suspects, there was often insufficient evidence for trial.

This book feels disjointed to me. It seems some chapters are told as independent stories while others are interconnected. For the most part I think the stories appear chronologically and allow the reader to see the agency grow and change over time, which is interesting. But some chapters end with a reference to a future event, which I assume will be covered later in the book. And while the author meticulously credits each agent, there are so many names that I cannot keep all the people straight. My expectation was that this would be a collection of cases that were told fairly independently rather than a web of storylines that criss-cross throughout the chapters.

Book has great dialogue and shows just how hard it was before technology brought telegraph and trains for communication and transportation. It is great that there were enough willing to put forth the effort to find the guilty parties in the crimes that were committed. It is much easier in this day than it was in the 1800's . Enjoyable read.

This was a nice relaxing and informative book. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys crime

and history books. This is the type of book that can be read several times.

Poorly organized and not well written. Interesting topic but needs much better flow and can't make the assumption that your audience is familiar with all parts of England.

This gets 4 stars because it was very interesting and quite different. It was fascinating to read about the early, early days of Scotland Yard. It's amazing that they solved any cases at all! The reason for 4 stars is that because sometimes it was difficult to follow what was going on. Some of the stories were fine, but others seemed to jump around a bit.

Well written and very informative read for this American with no prior knowledge of Scotland Yard or its beginnings. I found the author's personal comments interspersed throughout refreshing and worthy of the subject. Will keep this in my library for future reference.

A good read for those interested in history. Well researched. Would have liked more details on some of the cases, but these may not be available.

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